

President Levine's 2025 Fall Conference Video Script

Hello, everyone!

I want to express how happy and excited I am to be back at Cal Poly Pomona. This university is where I learned, taught and led. Where I made so many friends and memories.

This campus is my home, and now, I have the extraordinary honor of serving as your interim president.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of leading in a variety of ways — professor, department chair, dean, and most recently, provost. But no matter the title, one thing has always grounded me: our commitment to students and to one another. And that's why I'm back.

Some of you might remember a time not so long ago, when I was Music Department Chair. I used to walk through this building, our Recital Hall, every day and dream of turning our campus into an All-Steinway School — a distinction given to institutions where every piano is a Steinway — a distinction symbolizing the very best. It wasn't just about prestige. It was about providing our students with the highest-quality instruments to match their incredible talent and ambition. And that dream became my mission, and eventually our reality.

Some people said it couldn't be done. But with vision, collaboration and a deep belief in our students, we made it happen — together.

We became an All-Steinway School not just because we believed in pianos — but because we believed in students. That same passion extends to every corner of our campus. From the instruments in the rehearsal halls to the microscopes in the biology labs. From our exceptional faculty in our classrooms to our groundkeepers, counselling staff, maintenance crew and those who call the WK Kellogg Arabian Horse Center home. And speaking of the Arabian Horse Center, this year we are celebrating their centennial anniversary. One hundred years of equine excellence, leadership and hands-on learning.

We are all working in our own way to provide the best tools and experiences for our students.

Because that's what this community does. We lift each other up. We innovate. We care deeply about each other - our students, our faculty and our staff.

As your interim president, my time may be brief, but my heart and my focus are fully here. This is a year of transition, and with transition comes both challenge and opportunity. In fact, I like to think of this year as a kind of dress rehearsal — a chance for us to reflect, refine and prepare for the arrival of our next permanent president.

During this time, I want to affirm what so many of you already know: that we are on the right path. That our work matters — now more than ever. And that each of you, in your own way, is leading.

Because leadership isn't only found in titles or offices. It's found in the way we mentor students. In the way we collaborate across departments. In the way we show up for each other, even on the hardest days. Even when we don't think we can. Especially when we feel alone. Those are the times we must be there for each other the most. We must support each other as individuals, as human beings and as friends.

As we move forward together, I invite each of you to lead from where you are — wherever that is. Whether you're teaching in a classroom, working behind the scenes to keep our campus running, advising future graduates, conducting research, or serving our students delicious meals — your work is essential. Together, we will succeed.

And speaking of together, I want to acknowledge this year's One Team Award winners: **The Bronco Applicant Portal team!**

The Bronco Applicant Portal team, the largest team ever to win the award with twenty-six members, made up of individuals from Enrollment Management Services, New Student Orientation, Information Technology, Student Outreach & Recruitment, Student Success, Student Accounting, Strategic Communications and Housing, collaborated to reimagine the

applicant and new student experience through a holistic, digital-first approach.

This integrated portal provides applicants and admitted students with a personalized, and integrated experience for admission, financial aid, orientation, and onboarding processes that supports student success from application to day one on campus.

Congratulations to everyone responsible for this tremendous effort and thank you for continuing to put our students first.

We know how extraordinary our students are. They come to us from every walk of life, and they bring with them boundless potential. But potential alone isn't enough. We must continue to create conditions where talent can thrive. Where opportunity is not a matter of chance, but of design. Where they feel safe, seen and secure to grow.

I know that this work is not easy. But it is meaningful. And it is shared. And it is our purpose.

To our faculty — thank you for your brilliance, your mentorship, and your unwavering dedication to student success.

To our staff — thank you for the care, creativity, and problem-solving you bring every single day.

And to the leadership teams, shared governance partners, and the entire campus community — thank you for walking with me on this journey.

Before I close, I want to recognize someone who has been my constant partner in life and leadership — my wife, Lesili. Her love, support and belief in this work have been a quiet force behind everything I do. Thank you, Lesili, for being my rock and joining me on this journey.

So, as we begin this new academic year together, I'm filled with hope. Hope for what, together, we'll accomplish. Hope for the students we'll impact. And hope in the strength of this incredible community. And this hope reminds me of a quote by anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

I look forward to seeing you all around campus — and I especially hope to connect at the Campus Resource Fair, so look for me there.

Here's to a year of purpose, preparation and possibility. Here's to Cal Poly Pomona.

Thank you for listening...

Let's Go Broncos!